



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

## MASON'S LIFE OF STUART.

THE LIFE AND WORKS OF GILBERT STUART. By GEORGE C. MASON. *With Selections from Stuart's Portraits, reproduced on Steel and by Photogravure.* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1879. xii + 286 pp. and 13 plates.

**T**HIS superb volume is a monument to the art of book-making. The paper, the type, the press-work, the ample margins and the simple binding, are all in perfect harmony and excellent taste; and the publishers certainly deserve unstinted praise for their part of the work, — saving only the photogravure illustrations, which are failures, as all sun reproductions of color must be. With the work itself as a literary contribution to the history of art, we must confess we are sadly disappointed; we had hoped for more, we looked for better things. It is with regret that we have to record this verdict, and the author will appreciate our feelings when he remembers how gladly and how extensively we assisted him; investigating points and communicating results and facts, in the endeavor to make this work, not only a full and worthy memorial of the genius of Gilbert Stuart, but also a sterling and valuable contribution to the library of art biography. It is doubtless true that many readers will receive their first introduction to the man, Gilbert Stuart, through the medium of Mr. Mason's book, and that they will find it throughout as entertaining as it is gossipy. But in looking at the work from our stand-point, this is hardly the proper test to be applied, especially when it shows that by simply exercising a little more care and discrimination, and stretching out the hand in other directions, the lacking requisites might have been secured.

History being but the record of events in the lives of many men, biography stands in the foremost ranks of history, as from it the latter can alone be read. Therefore, what is needed in the biographer is the skill of the analyst and the skill of the synthesist, — the power to separate and to combine; and, when the subject written about is a specialist of any class, a due appreciation and technical knowledge of the specialty. It is the results flowing from these qualities that we find most wanting in Mr. Mason's book. The lack of new material is a misfortune not to be laid at his door; but when there was virtually nothing but what had been printed over and over again, where was the use or necessity of reproducing it, unless it was for the purpose of sifting the wheat from the chaff, and setting forth the fruit in an orderly, philosophical, and systematic manner? Dunlap's *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States*, published nearly half a century ago, — a truly valuable work, notwithstanding its many inaccuracies and occasional ebullitions of bad temper, — is the principal source whence comes the substance incorporated in that portion of Mr. Mason's book which forms the first part, — *The Life of Gilbert Stuart*; and the opening eighty-four pages of the volume show how extensively and indiscriminately it has been used. From this chronicle the many statements assigned to Dr. Waterhouse, Mr. Fraser, Mr. Neagle, Mr. Sully, Colonel Trumbull, and Dunlap himself, have been taken, without first submitting them to a crucial examination; while any one who has used Dunlap knows that he is to be followed only as one follows family tradition, as a clue for direct investigation. The result is that Mr. Mason

has adopted and perpetuated Dunlap's many and manifest errors.

The volume is divided into three principal parts, severally entitled, I. The Life of Gilbert Stuart; II. Stuart's Washington Portraits; III. A List of Stuart's Works; and, in discussing it, we shall consider them *seriatim*.

Mr. Mason tells us that Gilbert Stuart was born in an old-fashioned gambrel-roofed and low-portalled house, which stands at the head of Petaquamscott Pond, in the Narragansett country, in Rhode Island, on the 3d of December, 1755; and that on April 11th, 1756, as is shown by the records of St. Paul's Church, Narragansett, the Rev. Dr. McSparran "baptized a child named Gilbert Stewart, son of Gilbert Stewart, the snuff-grinder." Here then are two new and important facts, — the actual date of the artist's birth and the surname by which he was baptized. Until now, the year 1754 or 1756 has variously been given as that of Stuart's birth, the former being deduced from the inscription on his own portrait, now in the Redwood Library, Newport, R. I., which reads, "G. Stuart Pictor se ipse pinxit A. D. 1778, Ætatis suæ 24"; and the latter from the announcement that he was aged seventy-two at the time of his death, July 27th, 1828. The record of baptism is interesting, as fixing the correct form of spelling the family name, and shows that the artist's method was an affectation, as was also the adoption of the middle name, Charles, dropped soon after it was assumed, in imitation of the last of the royal Stuarts, the romantic Prince Charlie. Mr. Mason treats the spelling in the record as an "inadvertency in making the entry"; but in this we are forced to differ with him, and have the evidence of its correctness before us in a bill and receipt given by the father, Gilbert *Stewart*, to Samuel Freebody, dated June 15, 1771, for "12½ cord of wood wharfage @ 10/ per cord, £6. 5. 0.," where his name appears twice, and is spelled as in the record. This autograph has another value, as an additional proof of the inheritable qualities of handwriting, the signature being closely allied in character to that of the artist.

Stuart, it seems, had some advantages of education, but in his boyhood appears to have shown none of those peculiar characteristics which in manhood were so strongly developed, both in the artist and in the man. His first recognized picture was of two dogs, and at thirteen he painted the portraits of Mr. and Mrs. Bannister, which are still preserved. Some time after 1770, we are told that he went to England, with Cosmo Alexander, and worked his way home in a collier, after two years' absence; but as to when he left and when he returned we are not told. This brief sojourn in more cultured lands gave him some little insight into art; and in the spring of 1775 he sailed again for England, this time with the purpose of reaching the Mecca of all our early artists, the *atelier* of Benjamin West. Here he remained some years, attending the lectures of Sir Joshua Reynolds at the Royal Academy, and those on anatomy by the distinguished Dr. Cruikshank; and while here he painted the picture that, from all criticisms and accounts, must be his *chef-d'œuvre*, — the full-length portrait of Mr. Grant, skating. This picture was exhibited in January, 1878, at Burlington House, in a collection of "Pictures by the Old Masters," and attracted and received marked attention. In the printed catalogue it was attributed to Gainsborough. The *Saturday Review* for January 12, 1878 (page 50), in speaking of the exhibition,

remarks: "Turning to the English school, we may observe a most striking portrait in number 128, in Gallery III. This is set down in the Catalogue as 'Portrait of W. Grant, Esq., of Congalton, skating in St. James Park. Thomas Gainsborough, R. A. (?)' The query is certainly pertinent, for, while it is difficult to believe that we do not recognize Gainsborough's hand in the graceful and silvery look of the landscape in the background, it is not easy to reconcile the flesh tones of the portrait itself with any preconceived notion of Gainsborough's workmanship. The face has a peculiar firmness and decision in drawing, which reminds one rather of Raeburn than of Gainsborough, though we do not mean by this to suggest in any way that Gainsborough wanted decision in either painting or drawing when he chose to exercise it."

The discussion as to the authorship of this picture was warmly taken up, the champions of Raeburn, Romney, Shee, and Gainsborough each contending for the prize, until the question was set at rest by a grandson of the subject coming out with a card that it was by "the great portrait-painter of America, Gilbert Stuart,"—and to him it did justly belong. This magnificent work is now owned by Lord Charles Pelham Clinton.

Soon after completing the portrait of Mr. Grant, Stuart left the studio of West, and set up for himself; but before doing so, says Mr. Mason (page 15), following Dunlap, he painted a *full-length* portrait of his master. A little reflection would have avoided the introduction of this error, slight as it may seem, for on page 277, where the picture itself is described, Mr. Mason states correctly that it is a *half-length*. This picture was painted for the Boydells, as was also its companion piece, the portrait of William Woollett, the engraver; and both of them were soon after reproduced by the hand of Caroline Watson, in her beautiful and delicate style, unsuited, however, for the correct rendering of Stuart's robust manner, and published in London, respectively, September 1, 1785, and March 1, 1786. The paintings are now in the National Gallery. In this connection it may be well to mention that Mr. Mason has omitted from the list of portraits painted by Stuart the half-length, seated, of that great patron of the arts, Alderman Boydell, which was engraved by Facius for the *Graphic Illustrations of the Dramatic Works of Shakespeare*, issued by J. & J. Boydell in 1802, and subsequently engraved by H. Meyer for Cadell's *Gallery of Contemporary British Portraits*.

Stuart married in London, and remained there until 1788, when he was induced to visit Ireland and open a studio in Dublin. Here he lived a prodigal life, as he had in London; and, although fully employed and receiving the highest prices for his pictures, his purse was always empty. So poor was he, indeed, that when he returned to this country, in 1792, he had not the means to pay for his passage, and engaged to paint the portrait of the owner of the ship, John Shaw, as its equivalent. He landed in New York towards the close of the year; and, although the tradition has been handed down that the cause of his returning to America was his desire to paint the portrait of Washington, it seems, considering that he waited two years before visiting Philadelphia for the purpose, that the remark of Sir Thomas Lawrence upon hearing this reason assigned, "I knew Stuart well, and I believe the real cause of his leaving England was his having become tired of the inside of some of our prisons," (Leslie's Autobiography,)

may not be without foundation. Whatever the real cause was that brought Stuart home, we may congratulate ourselves that he came to live among us at the period that he did, for he was then in the fulness of his prime, and the pictures that he painted between this time and his removal to Boston, in 1805, are the finest productions of his brush on this side of the water. How strange it is that his best known pictures, the Washingtons, should be the least satisfactory of his works! This brings us to Part II. of Mr. Mason's book.

Gilbert Stuart came to reside in Philadelphia about New Year, 1795. Washington was then living in Robert Morris's house, on Market Street, below Sixth, and the Hall of Congress was at the corner of Sixth and Chestnut Streets. Stuart had his painting-room at the southeast corner of Fifth and Chestnut Streets, but he could not have lived here, as Mr. Mason states, for the reason that it was the home of William Moore Smith, a son of Provost Smith, a lawyer and a man of position and high standing, whose residence is given at this place in the City Directories for 1795, 1796, and 1797, while Stuart's name and residence are nowhere to be found. Tradition in the Smith family has it that Stuart lived at the Falls of Schuylkill, about five miles from the city, in a house belonging to Dr. Smith, whose portrait is one of his best works; and out of friendship the son gave him a room in his house, for a studio, it being located in the most fashionable part of the town. At all events, it was in this house, still standing, that the portrait of Washington was painted. In a notice such as this it is impossible even to attempt to render order out of the confusion to be found in this, the most important portion of the work. It is so devoid of unity and system, that to do so would be to rewrite, if we were competent, the entire thirty-five pages which comprise it; we shall therefore content ourselves with expressing our views on the subject generally.

There are two totally dissimilar types of Stuart's portraits of Washington. The one which is the earlier picture exhibits the right side of the face, and the other the left side. The first is generically known as the Vaughan picture, and the second as the Lansdowne and Athenæum heads, or, yet more familiarly, as Stuart's Washington. At what precise date the first picture was painted we do not know, but it was probably in the spring of 1795, for in April of that year Stuart made out a rough list of the names of some thirty-two gentlemen "who are to have copies of the portrait of the President of the United States." How many of these were made from the first picture is not known; there can be traced as now in existence only three, and whether any one of these is the original, painted from life, or whether Stuart actually "rubbed it out," as he wrote in 1823, must be left to conjecture. The Vaughan picture, which was engraved by Holloway (not Hallowell, as printed), in 1796, for Dr. Hunter's sumptuous quarto edition of Lavater's *Essays on Physiognomy*, is now owned in Philadelphia by the widow of the late Joseph Harrison. A second is in Lancaster, Pa., and the third, which is the best of all, is now known as the Gibbs portrait, and is most faithfully reproduced on steel by Burt, from the original, belonging to Dr. Channing, of Providence, and also by photogravure by Goupil, for Mr. Mason's volume.

For introducing this last-named picture to the public, Mr. Mason merits universal thanks, and it is only to be regretted that it has remained hidden so long. Had it

been known earlier, we feel confident in asserting that the Athenæum head would not have become the accepted likeness of Washington. We had the privilege of seeing the Gibbs portrait when it was in the engraver's hands, and to say that it is noble as a portrait and grand as a picture is but to express feebly the impression it made upon us. In the first place, it is what the Lansdowne and Athenæum heads are not, it is the likeness of *a man*,—a man who has lived among men: firmness and gentleness, decision and moderation, thoughtfulness and power, are all depicted there. One feels that Washington could have looked like this, and it is not so unlike the portraits painted by other artists; but no one can ever feel thoroughly satisfied that he did look like either the Lansdowne or the Athenæum heads, while as paintings they are far inferior to many of Stuart's other works. This is what we meant when we said that it was strange his best-known pictures should be the least satisfactory of his works.

The portrait known as the Lansdowne picture was Stuart's first full-length of Washington, and was painted in April, 1796. Subsequently, the Athenæum head, which is an unfinished vignette, was produced. The existence and whereabouts of two replicas of the Lansdowne picture are known and mentioned by Mr. Mason, and he notes three of the *tea-pot* portraits; but a fourth, an undoubted original, in the State House at Hartford, Conn., he omits. A curious contradiction and inconsistency appears in connection with a half-length portrait painted for William Constable, which Mr. Mason states (page 98) to be "the only half-length of Washington by Stuart that I remember to have heard of"; yet on page 113, he describes another as painted in 1822, for Mr. William D. Lewis, the same gentleman who is incorrectly said (page 97) to have been Chairman of the Committee on Art of the Centennial Exhibition. We trust that in a future edition this chapter will be cleared up from its present befogged condition.

Following the order of the book, we now reach the *List of Portraits*, and here again we regret to be forced to express our dissatisfaction. It was, of course, a most difficult and laborious work to bring together the names of so many of Stuart's sitters, upward of six hundred, and what Mr. Mason has accomplished in this respect forms a valuable and important record. But in the descriptions there is too much about the subject, and not enough about the picture: not that we would have any complaint against the former, if equal attention had been given to the latter; but as it is, it takes more the shape of a biographical dictionary, than a *catalogue raisonné* of the portraits by Stuart. Then there is no alphabetical table appended, and the index does not include the portraits; and to make this portion of the work convenient and valuable as a guide for students, there should have been what may be termed a geographical table, indicating the locality of the portraits, which would have brought all those in any given locality together. Another most important matter is, that proper names should be correctly given; yet there are innumerable errors in this respect: indeed, the proof-reading of the book seems to have been entirely neglected. The references to the engraved portraits are also far from being complete, and several that have been engraved are not even included in the list, such as Albert Gallatin, Elias Hasket Derby, Peter Chardon Brooks, Dr. William Shippen, Dr. Cruikshank, Dr. John Fothergill, Thomas Malton, the Rev. William Preston, Bishop Cleaver, the Dukes of

Leinster and Manchester, John Kemble as Richard III., and the Right Honorables William Brownlow, John Foster, William Burton Conyngham, and John Beresford, the latter engraved by Sharp. One of the oddest omissions to indicate an engraved portrait is that of Samuel Dexter, it having been so long familiar to every one on the fifty-cent notes of the fractional currency. It seems to us, too, that greater attention should have been paid to this subject, than simply affixing a dagger before the portrait in the list. Surely the plates of David Edwin, after Stuart's works, should have been specially mentioned, or at least some of them. His portraits of William Smith, Edward Shippen, President Madison, and Chief-Justice McKean are marvels of interpretation of Stuart's manner and color, rendered in black and white. Then there are the portraits of Martha Washington and Mrs. Blodgett, engraved by John Cheney, in the purest and most feeling style.

In the body of the book, there is a brief chapter devoted to the portraits of Stuart himself, which is only marred by more than half of it being taken up with a eulogy on Miss Goodridge, who was so fortunate as to have painted a miniature of the artist. This miniature, very prettily engraved on wood by Cole, appears on the title-page, and a pen-and-ink sketch of Stuart, by himself, has been well etched in fac-simile, by Duthie, for the volume. The strongest and most characteristic portrait of Stuart, that by Neagle, now in the Boston Art Museum, is dismissed with a bare mention, and no notice whatever is taken of the print from it, superbly engraved by Edwin as his valedictory to the burin: it was his last work, and he was able only to finish the head, the remainder of the picture having to be done by another hand. There was also a silhouette portrait of Stuart, cut at Peale's Museum, which he gave to Mrs. Hopkinson, and is the same as he has introduced into her picture (see page 201). It was reproduced for Smith and Watson's *American Historical and Literary Curiosities*, to accompany a fac-simile of a receipt for \$100 given by Stuart to Mr. I. P. Davis, "in full for a portrait of Washington to be painted by me." The receipt is dated, "Boston, Dec. 14, 1805." It seems by the resemblance, that it was from this silhouette that the die was cut for the Stuart medal.

That Stuart was a master in the art of portrait-painting it needs no argument to prove; his works are the only argument needed, and they prove it most satisfactorily. In his life-like portraits the men and women of a past generation live again. Each individual is here, and it was Stuart's ability to portray the *individual*, that was his greatest power. Each face looks at you, and fain would speak, while the brilliant and animated coloring makes one forgetful that it is of the past. Stuart's pictures have come down to us very little injured by time, which is doubtless owing to the use by him of pure colors, and his manner of employing them. He told Neagle (Neagle's MS. Commonplace Book) that he practised Rubens's method of painting, which was "to lay each tint in its place separately and distinctly alongside of each other, before any blending was used, and then they were united by means of a large soft sweetener or brush, and without teasing or corrupting the freshness of the tints." It is this method that gives the firmness and solidity to his flesh-work. A marked feature in Stuart's work is the total absence of all lines,—"*There are no lines in nature,*" he once said,—his work being painted in with the brush

from the beginning. It is this process that gives to his modelling its strength and rotundity.

The statement given by Miss Stuart, to Mr. Mason, of her father's method and manner of work, with the colors he employed, is strangely at variance with the accounts given by other artists and the evidence derived from the works themselves. When she says, "He never glazed his pictures, nor ever attempted in this way to strengthen his shadows, for he thought it a trick," she is contradicted by her own setting of his palette, where *lake*, a glaze color, appears. She is contradicted further on by Dunlap, who says Stuart instructed him, "For finishing, add lake to your palette, and *asphaltum*," the latter also a glaze color; and by Jowett, in Stuart's *Remarks on Art*, where the advice is given, "Never glaze *until* you have a sufficient body of color as will stand against all the accidents liable to picture-cleaning." Apart from these statements, the pictures themselves show, that Stuart did glaze. It seems singular that Mr. Mason should print all of these contradictory accounts, without adding a word of explanation of his own.

We cannot conclude this notice without calling attention to one article printed in the volume, which cannot be reprinted too often; we mean the tribute of the poet-painter Allston to his dead *confrère*. How marvellously unlike their characters and their lives! yet how appreciative and just and beautiful is this memorial! We lay down our pen, glad that our work is finished, for it was with mingled feelings of hesitation and restraint that we addressed ourselves to this review. It is not agreeable to have to speak severely of the work of one who stands to you in the relations of personal friendship; but, having accepted the task allotted to us, we could not shrink from what we felt to be our duty, and we have performed it as we thought right.

CHARLES HENRY HART.

#### TYPOGRAPHIC ETCHINGS.



HE following documents are given place here, — perhaps not quite fittingly, — because they were called forth by a remark made in the Bibliography for January.

FROM THE NATION, OF FEB. 12: — "In speaking of the second number of the AMERICAN ART REVIEW recently we expressed the hope that its editorial 'Chronicles' at the end would be accurate, and that there might be found in them the art news of the day, so sifted and chosen that it could be relied on. It is with great regret that we find in the third number, in the 'Bibliography' and under the signature of the chief editor himself, what seems an awkward piece of 'journalism.' It happened a year ago (Dec. 12, 1878) that our columns contained a review of the Boston edition of Falke's *Art in the House*, which book has upon its title-page the words 'Illustrated by Chromolithographs, Albertotypes, and Typographic Etchings,' and that in the course of that review these words occurred: 'The illustrations to this part of the book are seventeen pictures in the text, looking like not very delicate woodcuts, but probably typographic etchings, which certainly are not etchings at all.' Out of these innocent words — words which are not inaccurate, as we mean to show, and certainly not offensive — the editor of the ART REVIEW makes up the statement that we 'gave the lie to the publishers of a well-known book,' and that we asserted that

these prints were 'not etchings at all, but simply coarse wood-cuts.' Now, in the general language of art, an etching is a design engraved on a plate (usually of metal) by means of acid. By an extension of the term, plates that have received work with the dry point, and even with the burin, are still considered as etched. The work is all engraving, in the literal sense, — that is, incised or cut or eaten out of the plate: the design is depressed and not in relief, and the printing from the plate is done with the copper-plate press, the paper being forced into the grooves or sunken lines, and the ink drawn thence to the surface of the paper. But the prints of which we were speaking are interspersed in the text, and, therefore, apparently the originals were *in relief*, and the printing done as if from wood-blocks or electrotypes of wood-blocks. We objected and still object to the fashion of coining names for new processes which tend to confuse people as to those processes. One of the monthly magazines had once a page or two of comic matter at the end, a few verses and anecdotes with a picture or two, the whole entitled 'Etchings.' It is not unusual to hear pen-and-ink drawings called 'etchings.' Our objection to these fashions of speech and to the name 'typographic etchings' given to relief-blocks for printing (even if made by means of the corroding power of acid acting on metal) is the same: they are misleading. Those prints are not from etchings in the proper sense, if they are, as we assume, from relief-blocks. But at the same time we did not intend to bear on so heavily as all this. It was the gratuitous attribution to us of ignorant haste and rudeness, all based on a misquotation, that has caused the discussion to occupy more than the two lines of the original statement."

REPLY. — TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION. Sir, — In your issue of Feb. 12th exception is taken to a statement made by me in No. 3 of the AMERICAN ART REVIEW, — not unjustly, I am quite ready to confess, as, quoting from memory (a practice not to be encouraged), it seems I omitted a qualifying phrase. The substantial correctness, however, of my assertion that "the lie direct" had been given is not impugned by the amended quotation. If the statement that certain illustrations are "typographic etchings" is met with the flat and unqualified assertion that they are *not etchings at all*, it is difficult to see wherein such a proceeding differs from a questioning of the veracity of the person who made the original statement.

These illustrations, as I know of my own personal knowledge, were produced by *etching*, that is to say, the "corrosive power of acid, acting on metal." It is immaterial, as far as the technical process is concerned, whether the result is a block for the type-press or a plate for the roller-press. I know also that the term "typographic etchings" was adopted after careful consideration, as best expressing the facts in the case. Nor was it used without precedent. The term *eaux-fortes typographiques* is well-known in France, and will be found, for instance, on the title-page of Jacquemart's *Histoire du Mobilier*, Paris, 1876. That is tolerably good authority, I believe.

There was no question, therefore, of "coining names for new processes which tend to confuse people as to these processes." If the public is uninformed regarding the nature of the various processes, and insists upon confining a given term to only one of its applications, that is simply the fault of the public. It would be a less "awkward piece of journalism," perhaps, if in such a case the critic